

Memoirs

1. From Thomas Chatterton Williams' *Self-Portrait in Black and White: Unlearning Race* (2019), I was really challenged in my thinking about race. I disagree with MOST of Williams' argument in the book, largely about rejecting race (especially blackness), but he engaged with all the points I would make in my disagreement. That meant that I had to take seriously his argument about rejecting both racism and race itself.
2. I read *The Line Becomes a River: Dispatches from the Border* (2018) by Francisco Cantu for a book club. It helped to humanize border patrol agents to me AND it shined a light on how flawed our immigration system is.
3. I read *Deep Creek: Finding Hope in the High Country* (2019) by Pam Houston for my "Women Reading Women" (WRW) book club. Houston's story did not much resonate with me, but I appreciated her appreciation of nature.
4. I read Max Carter's *Palestine and Israel: A Personal Encounter* (2020) in order to write a *Friends Journal* book review for it. I enjoyed how personal it was and also how much it mirrored my experiences. I feel like it helped me get to know both a region and a person more intimately. And it spoke to the complications we all face when talking about that region.
5. *Solutions and Other Problems* by Allie Brosh (2020) was so delightful. It brought me such joy in a challenging fall.
6. I was obsessed this fall with cults. *Scarred* by Sarah Edmondson (2019) was an interesting window into that world.
7. *The Distance Between Us* by Reyna Granda (2012) was a powerful look into the experience of those who cross the border into the US out of necessity. Definitely empathy building.
8. *See No Stranger* by Valarie Kaur (2020) was one of the most transformative books I've ever read - so many examples of the power of living love. I bought a hard copy just so that I could flip to any page and be transported back to its wisdom.
9. *Girl Gurl Grrrl: On Womanhood and Belonging in the Age of Black Girl Magic* by Kenya Hunt (2020) was an interesting reflection on the moment we're in as a society and the impact it has on Black women. It resonated.
10. *The Beauty in Breaking* by Michele Harper showed me that there are some similarities between being an emergency room doctor and an Upper School head, and that those similarities are powerful.

Professional Development

1. I read *Hacking School Discipline: 9 Ways to Create a Culture of Empathy & Responsibility Using Restorative Justice* by Nathan Maynard and Brad Weinstein (2019) because people on

my social media kept posting about how great it was. I did indeed learn some practical tips to support my discipline instincts.

2. Since I had earlier in the year so enjoyed *Hacking Discipline*, I thought I'd try another in the series -- *Hacking Leadership: 10 Ways Great Leaders Inspire Learning That Teachers, Students, and Parents Love* (2016) by Joe Sanfelippo and Tony Sinanis. Although this book did not offer any major aha moments for me, it did make me feel as though I was on the right track.

3. *Dare to Lead* by Brené Brown (2018) was exactly the leadership book I needed this year to feel like the challenges I face as a leader were normal.

Spiritual Reading

1. I love a good Lenten reflection through the *Sacred Space* books (in this case, *Sacred Space: for Lent 2020* by the Irish Jesuits). These books always remind me of the qualities I aspire to cultivate (particularly embodying love).

2. I did a study group around the book *Breathe: Making Room for Sabbath* (2014) by Priscilla Shirer. It reminded me that I have to be in control of my work and social media use, and not the other way around. I need to make time for my interior/spiritual life.

3. Pema Chödrön's *Welcoming the Unwelcome* (2019) was deeply moving to me. So much much-needed wisdom and invitation to perspective taking.

4. *How to Keep a Spiritual Journal: A Guide to Journal Keeping for Inner Growth and Personal Discovery* by Ron Klug (2002) both made me feel confident about and appreciative of the journal keeping I already do and gave me tips for how I can make the most of my journaling.

Racial/Social Justice

1. I hadn't been sure whether to read *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* by Robin DiAngelo (2018) because its audience is white people. I learned about how significant white fragility is to my own life and how important it is to be able to name it.

2. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* by Matthew Desmond (2016) serves as a call to action for housing justice. We have a deeply broken system. It is a stunning work that came from Desmond immersing himself in communities with high evictions. I loved the epilogue in which he talked about his process and the relationships he built along the way.

3. *Just Us: An American Conversation* by Claudia Rankine (2020) was such a powerful look conversation about race, specifically blackness, in America.

4. *Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' of the Holy Father Francis: On Care for Our Common Home* by Pope Francis (2015) is a powerful reflection on the interconnectedness of justice work.

5. *The Best of Enemies* by Osha Gray Davidson (1996) was a great introduction to Durham's civil rights struggle. Made it feel all the more like home.

6. *This Book Is Anti-Racist* by Tiffany Jewell (2020) has been foundational to the anti-racist work in my school this year.

7. *We Will Not Cancel Us: And Other Dreams of Transformative Justice* by adrienne maree brown (2020) reminded me of the harm that cancel culture can do.

Miscellaneous Nonfiction

1. I started *Show Your Work: 10 Ways to Share Your Creativity and Get Discovered* (2014) by Autsin Kleon at least a couple years ago, but in this wild year, it was nice to be reminded of all the different forms that our creativity can take!

2. I picked up David Ulin's *The Lost Art of Reading: Books and Resistance in a Troubled Time* (2010, updated 2018) at an independent bookstore last year and it reading it always brought me the feeling I love about being in a bookstore. It was a great reminder of why I love reading (empathy building, perspective growing) and made me feel ready to read more about writing!

3. My brother recommended Michael Lewis's *The Fifth Risk: Undoing Democracy* (2018) because of the insight it offers on the politics of the United States. Although I did learn a good bit about what different departments of the government do, I did not enjoy that flashlight on the trainwreck that is our democracy right now. I'm already doing my part to get us back on the rails!

Poetry

1. I've been reading Hafiz's *The Gift* translated by Daniel Ladinsky (1999) for years, often as part of my morning meditation. Hafiz offers me lots of new ways to consider God with gratitude.

2. I read *Antigona Gonzalez* (2016) by Sara Uribe (translated by John Pluecker) because it was referenced in *The Line Becomes a River* and I always love reimaginings of Greek literature. This work explores disappearances in Mexico and the pain of losing a loved one and feeling unsettled. It is written to be performed, and much of it is made up of quotations from the news, academic works, and literature. At the end John Pluecker includes a gorgeous reflection on translation ("Translation is an insistence that despite the intensity and breadth of human suffering, one place must be able to exist as one place . . . Translation is a flexible and temporary alliance across great distance, great difference.").

3. I read Ross Gay's *catalog of unabashed gratitude* (2015) as my spiritual reading before bed for a while. Like all of his work, its poetry was both insightful and beautiful. He offers an invitation to mindfulness.

4. *The Conversation* (2018) by Shukria Dellawar was another book of spiritual poetry that I appreciated for its window into someone else's experience and reminder that we are each both unique and connected.

5. *Make Me Rain: Poems & Prose* by Nikki Giovanni (2020) was a powerful testament to love and joy and blackness. It came at exactly the right time as I needed to feel grounded in myself.

6. *1919* by Eve L. Ewing (2019) is a beautiful combination of history and poetry. Reminded me of the power of each.

7. *Ache* by Joseph Ross (2017) was poetry that powerfully engaged racial injustice.

8. *The Tragic Type of Beautiful: The Journey of Magic and Mayhem* by Cheyenne Tyler Jacobs (2018) was beautiful, powerful poems that addressed, in part, the complexities of black womanhood. I felt seen!

Fiction

1. I heard Tayari Jones talk about *An American Marriage* (2018) before I read it, and I really enjoyed hearing about her storytelling process. The book explores issues around our broken justice system and the impact that it has on families. It took me a while to warm up to it, but once it got to the heart of its story, I was hooked!

2. I ended up going on a 90-minute walk to finish *The Nickel Boys* (2019) by Colson Whitehead. What a powerful story of the injustice of our justice system, its impact on youth, and the trauma to which it leads.

3. Paul Beatty's *The Sellout* (2015) had been loaned to me by a friend years ago, and its biting satire was a bit too much for me at the time. During spring break this year, I needed a book that took me entirely out of our nonsense world. It did that AND it led me to think about the racial injustice we abide each day.

4. I was inspired to read *Little Fires Everywhere* (2017) because of the tv show based on the book. It is an interesting exploration of a white savior complex backfiring. A powerful page-turner!

5. I also read Marjan Kamali's *The Stationary Shop* (2019) for WRW. It was another book that got off to a slow start, but I was invested in the story as it developed. It provides an interesting window into Iran in the 1950s.

6. I read Kiley Reid's *Such a Fun Age* (2020) because I had heard that it got off to a strong start, and indeed it did. An interesting investigation of the complexities of finding oneself for its twenty-something Black protagonist and an exploration of white savior complex through her boss/foil.

7. My Women Reading Women book club read Sarah Waters's *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), which was a bit hard as our discussion was in the middle of a racial justice uprising and those themes did not show up in the book. However, I've been told that it's an important part of "the lesbian canon," and can understand why it is. Certainly the world of nineteenth-century British lesbians is not something I had considered before.

8. I thoroughly enjoyed the mystery of *Where the Crawdad's Sing* (2018) by Delia Owens (who has her own interesting life story/murder mystery!). It tells the story of a "swamp girl" from rural North Carolina and how she was shunned by her neighbors. It provides an interesting look at classism.

9. To be honest, I was disappointed by *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* by Suzanne Collins, a prequel to the *Hunger Games* trilogy. I don't think it provided much more of a window into any of the more powerful aspect of the *Hunger Games* story, except for maybe asking the reader to think about our own morbid fascination with it.

10. I read *The Vanishing Half* (2020) by Brit Bennett because people kept raving about how good it was. I did enjoy it. An interesting look at identity. The identity we experience and the identity we express and the toll it takes when there's a gap between those.

11. I absolutely devoured *Felix Ever After* (2020) by Kacen Callender. It is the story of a trans boy who is exploring his identity and comes to understand that he is deserving of love. We are all deserving of love.

12. I read *Make Your Home Among Strangers* (2015) by Jennine Capo Crucet for book club. It is slow and sometimes frustrating, but at the end of the day it tells an important story about a first generation college student and the struggles she went through that others couldn't see.

13. *A Study in Scarlet Women* by Sherry Thomas (2016) was a fun novel that I enjoyed throughout my Thanksgiving holiday.

14 and 15. Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993) and *Parable of the Talents* (1998) were beautiful and thoughtful and shined a light on the importance of resilience in a year in which I needed that light.

16. *Mexican Gothic* by Silvia Moreno-Garcia (2020) was very weird and I'm not sure I totally understood it, but its themes strike a deeper cord about colonialism (and fungus).

17. *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* by Ocean Vuong (2019) was indeed gorgeous. It had been recommended for the beauty of its language, and it did not disappoint.

18. *The Good Lord Bird* by James McBride (2013) was an interesting fictionalized story of John Brown. It was a reminder of the complexities behind the history we know.

19. *Transcendent Kingdom* by Yaa Gyasi (2020) was sadder than I needed this year, which led me to not love it, but it is certainly well written and captured grief and addiction well.

20. I read *The Old Guard: Force Multiplied* by Greg Rucka (2020) after watching and enjoying the movie *Old Guard*, and thoroughly enjoyed the second volume in the series.

21. *Mean Season* by Heather Cochran (2004) has long been one of my favorites and it was so soothing in this challenging year.

[Books I read in 2019](#)